

REPORT

FROM

THE SECRETARY OF WAR,

IN ANSWER TO

*A resolution of the Senate of January 14, 1846, relative to securing the inland communication between Fort Gratiot and the works at Sand Hill, and the military road between those places, and extending the same to the United States arsenal at Dearbonville.*

JANUARY 20, 1846.

Read.

JANUARY 29, 1846.

Referred to the Committee on Military Affairs, and ordered to be printed.

WAR DEPARTMENT, January 19, 1846.

SIR: In answer to a resolution of the Senate of the United States of the 14th instant, requiring the Secretary of War to report to the Senate "what further measures are necessary, if any, in order to secure the inland communication between Fort Gratiot and the works now in progress of completion at Sand Hill, on the Detroit river; and also, with that view, as to the expediency of rendering more permanently convenient and available the military road formerly laid out from Fort Gratiot to Detroit, and of extending the same to said military works at Sand Hill, and thence to the United States arsenal at Dearbonville," I respectfully transmit, herewith, a report of the colonel of the corps of topographical engineers, which contains the best views and estimates that can now be presented by this department in relation to the subject referred to in the resolution.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

W. L. MARCY,  
Secretary of War.

GEO. M. DALLAS,  
Vice President of the United States,  
and President of the Senate.

BUREAU OF TOPOGRAPHICAL ENGINEERS,  
Washington, January 19, 1846.

SIR: I have the honor to acknowledge your direction to report upon a resolution of the Senate of the 14th instant.

The resolution requires, 1st, information of the measures necessary, if

any, to secure the inland communication between Fort Gratiot and the works now in progress of completion at Sand Hill, on the Detroit river.

Fort Gratiot is at the upper end of the river St. Clair, about 60 miles from Detroit. The work at Sand Hill is about 3 miles below Detroit; making the total distance of the road herein referred to 63 miles. The road from Detroit to Fort Gratiot was once partially made as a military road. There is a report on this subject from a committee of the House of Representatives, printed as document 42, 1st session 19th Congress. The same road is also referred to in the annual report from this office of December, 1839. The road is described as passing "through Wayne, Macomb, and St. Clair counties, terminating near the northern end of the strait between Lake St. Clair and Lake Huron. It passes principally through a flat and heavily timbered country; is much out of repair, and in some places nearly impassable. Its chief importance is as a military road, to maintain a communication between the town of Detroit and the fort during periods when the navigation is suspended by ice. About half a mile, at its northern end, passing round the enclosure at Fort Gratiot, has never been completed. For this short distance an appropriation of \$500 will be sufficient. For its repairs, about \$5,000 more will be required. The road is not considered as affording any great commercial or agricultural facilities to the State, but is principally of value as a military road, which character it will possess so long as it may be considered necessary to maintain the post of Fort Gratiot."

The estimate for completing the road at that time was \$5,500, but no appropriation was made; and as there has not been any superintendence or examination of the road since the date of that estimate, it is not in my power to say what it would now require to put it in good order. It is well understood, however, that the estimate stated would not put the road in order at this time, as it has become much dilapidated since the date of that estimate.

2d. "Of the expediency of rendering more permanently convenient and available the military road formerly laid out from Fort Gratiot to Detroit." This part of the inquiry may be considered as answered in what has been previously said. The expediency, indeed the necessity of preserving this road, cannot be considered otherwise than eminent, so long as it shall be found necessary to maintain the post of Fort Gratiot.

3d. The propriety of extending the road to the military works at Sand Hill, and thence to the United States arsenal at Dearbonville. The road from Detroit to Sand Hill is about 3 miles long; it passes principally over a clay soil, and during spring and fall weather it is in extremely bad order, and in a measure impassable. The best improvement would probably be to construct a plank road in this distance. We have no experience in the construction of such roads in our country, but they have been used to some extent in Canada, and are much approved. Taking the average of cost from experience there, it will be found to be about \$5,000 the mile.

As to a road direct from Sand Hill to the United States arsenal at Dearbonville, it appears to me not to be of such immediate necessity. The Michigan railroad from Detroit to St. Joseph passes through Dearbonville; and if the road from Detroit to Sand Hill be improved as proposed, the route, by means of this railroad, will furnish an excellent communication from Sand Hill to the arsenal at Dearbonville. It would, without doubt,

be advantageous to have a branch railroad from the works at Sand Hill, passing some distance in the rear of Detroit, intersecting the railroad from Detroit to Dearbonville; but in this case the road from Sand Hill to Detroit need not be made, as the two roads to communicate with the arsenal would not be required.

Respectfully, sir, your obedient servant,

J. J. ABERT,

*Colonel Corps Top. Engineers.*

Hon. W. L. MARCY,

*Secretary of War.*

